

CUSTOMER ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE MOBILE PHONE SERVICES INDUSTRY

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Abstract: The free mobility had become an integral part of the customer's life. India had shown a tremendous growth in the past few years in respect of the cellular services. Mobile phones had emerges as a been to quench such a thirst, by providing many facilities, which the common person could not even imagine. Though the cell phone industry had its origin only in the recent past, its growth had been a tremendous growth and the telecommunication services in India had witnessed a phenomenal change in the last few years. The mobile phone service providers in India had transformed themselves from merely offering voice connectivity to one of providing value added services to their customers, such as Multimedia Message Service (MMS) and Internet connectivity.

Key words: Mobile phone, Service providers, Telecommunication, Internet, Globalisation

1. Introduction

The booming revolution in the information technology sector had pushed up India's telecom market quite significantly. During the past few years the consumers had begun to prefer the wireless mode of the telephone services. The free mobility had become an integral part of the customer's life. With the spreading of wireless communication technologies, people were becoming more and more addicted to the use of the mobile phones.

Mobile phones had emerges as a boon to quench such a thirst, by providing many facilities, which the common person could not even imagine. Though the cell phone industry had its origin only in the recent past, its growth had been a tremendous growth and the Tele communication services in India had witnessed a phenomenal change in the last few years.

After liberalization of the Indian Telecom Sector in 1994, the National Telecom Policy (NTP) was established to improve India's position in Global Telecommunication and in 1997, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) was established to regulate all the Telecommunication services in India. Bharti, a part of Bharti Enterprises was the first mobile service provider to offer its services on the 7th July, 1995 and from then onwards, the Indian market had witnessed a huge surge in the number of mobile service providers, and at present there were about 15 service providers in this market.

The Indian Telecommunication sector could be divided into the fixed service providers and the cellular service providers. The cellular service providers could be further divided into Global System for Mobile communication (GSM) and the Code Division Multiple Access (CDMA). In India, the GSM sector is dominated by Airtel and Vodafone Whereas the CDMA is dominated by Reliance and Tata Indicom.

The customer relationship is the most important factor in today's competitive environment. The dynamic change in the business environment with their decreasing prices of the call rates had compelled the companies to shift their revenue models and their business processes to cope up with the changing needs and the expectations of the customers.

2. Statement of the problem

Communication is the life blood for interpersonal relationships and for the development of an individual's social status. In formal organizations, the role of communication was very vital for the development of the business and for carrying it on in a planned way. Vast changes had taken place over a period of time, starting with Graham Bell's land line services phone to the modern latest wireless cellular services (mobile phone services).

People of all age groups had started using the mobile phones. It was the most convenient means for connecting people who were living anywhere in the world. The people prefer it had enabled it the point to point communication in a very quick way. The efficient and effective usage of this media of communication largely depended upon the efficient services provided by the cell phone providers. Still there is a gap between the customers' expectations and the quality of the services offered which had left to the shifting of the customers from one service provider to another, which was a nuisance to both the concerned parties. The present study had made an attempt to compare the customer, perceptions towards the mobile phone services that had been offered in the Madurai City.

3. Need for the study

With the increase in the technological development the customers' had also become more and more demanding, as far as quality offered was concerned. The Government and the professional bodies had set up some benchmarks for raising the service quality and the service satisfaction levels. Further as stated earlier the service quality had been affected by the customers' expectation and perceptions and the perceptions might be differing from person to person. To understand the customers' expectations according to their perceptions it had become necessary to incorporate the voices of the customers.

To achieve these goals the researcher had to first find out the various quality of service parameters from the customers' expectation point of view. Here, the researcher had attempted to identify the core customer service parameters and had focused on their impact on customers' satisfaction.

4. Review of literature

*Wang and Lo (2002) had identified the relationship between the service quality factors such as, overall service quality, customer value, customer satisfaction and of behaviour intentions. The significant impact was identified between the tangibles, the reliability on overall service quality; assurance and empathy on overall service quality, tangibles, empathy, network quality and customer sacrifice on customer value; reliability assurance and network quality on customer satisfaction and customer value and satisfaction on behaviour intentions.

*Sinha (2004) had analyzed the performance on the GSM service providers on the basis of their marketing programmes. These had included coverage within the city, inside the buildings, goods value for money, coverage inside the basements or lifts, use of best technology, recommendation by all, quality of SMS, good infrastructure, value added services, documentations required, activation time, prompt receipts of bills, error free billing, availability of recharge cards, pricing of STD calls and local calls, time validity ease of locating the dealer and ease in balance enquiry

*Atsushi Limi (2005) in is paper had analyzed the demand for cellular phone services using data on the Japanese cellular phone market, in the late 1990s. He had found that the market was highly product differentiated and the conventional network externalities were no longer the decisive factors in choosing a mobile phone carrier. The evidence had also shown that the demand for cellular phone services was quite price elastic, with estimated elasticity varying from 1.30 to 2.43 in their absolute values.

5. Objectives of the study

- i) To ascertain the attributes that the consumers prefer in selecting a particular mobile phone service provider
- ii) To analyze the customers' perceptions on service quality of the mobile phone service providers in the Madurai City
- iii) To understand and offer valuable suggestions to improve the services of mobile phone service providers

6. Scope of the study

This paper is an attempt to analyze the awareness among the cell phone users about the various facilities provided by the various services providers, the factors influencing the choice of the cell phones and the cell connections and problems faced by the users. The present study is an attempt to throw the much light on the preferences of cell phone users with postpaid and prepaid mobile services in the Madurai City.

7. Period of the study

The present study had covered a period of January 2018 and the required data was collected. The primary data was collected through a field survey conducted by the researcher during the month of January 2018

8. Methodology

The design of suitable methodology and the selection of the appropriate analytical tools were very important in making a meaningful analysis of a chosen problem. This section had been devoted to a description of the methodology adopted in the present study.

8.1 Collection of data

The study was based on both the primary as well as the secondary data. To collect the general information regarding the cell phone services, secondary data had been collected from various journals, published reports, books, periodicals and the like. The interview schedule on customers' attitudes towards mobile phone services offered was prepared and administered to collect information regarding the customers' perceptions about the cell phone service providers.

8.2 The Sampling design

A sample of 50 respondents had been chosen for this study. As the main purpose of the study was to understand the consumers' perceptions in the selection of the cellular mobile telecommunication service provider in Madurai City, a structured interview schedule was constructed to collect the required primary data from the consumers. The interview schedule was systematically distributed utilizing a non-probability convenience sampling method from walk in customers of market place and at educational institutions.

8.3 Tools of analysis

The collected data, both primary and secondary, were put to a critical statistical examination with the help of tool such as the percentile analysis had been applied for analyzing the data

9. Limitations of the study

It was also very difficult to obtain the necessary information from the customers. The mobile phone dealers as well as the retailers as most of them were very reluctant to disclose all the information available with

them however the researcher had persuaded them and convinced them about the purpose of the study and obtained the information from them.

10. Analysis and interpretation

10.1 Reasons for using the mobile phones

There were so many reasons put forward by the sample respondents for using the mobile phones. This study had been carried out to analyze the major factors that had induced the customers to use the mobile phones for their day to day requirements. Various reasons are taken into consideration that had been analyzed and presented in the table no. 10.1

Table No. 10.1
Reasons for using mobile phone by the respondents

Sl.No	Reasons	No.of Respondents	Percentage to total
1	General use	3	6
2	Easy contacts	6	12
3	Prestige	4	8
4	Quick communication	6	12
5	Official purposes	5	10
6	Contact while travelling	7	14
7	Economy in cost	6	12
8	Could contact at any time	7	14
9	Development of business	2	4
10	To curtail telephone expenses	4	8
	Total	50	100

Source: Primary data

From the table no. 10.1, it could be inferred that the most of customers (7 out of 50) had preferred mobile phones to establish contacts with others while travelling and could contact at any time (14 percent). By analyzing the above factors, it could be found that the reasons for the use of the mobile phones had varied from customer to customer.

10.2 Reasons for using the mobile phones instead of the landline

Before the '90s the landlines were the familiar ones and the mobile phones were still away from the recognition of the people. After introduction of the mobile phones, people started realizing the benefits of using the mobile phones, instead of the landline connections, most of the people had started to surrender their landline connections and started getting their cell phone connections for each and every member in the family

Table 10.2
Reasons for using mobile phone services instead of landline connections

Sl.No	Reasons	No.of Respondents	Percentage to total
1	Mobility	19	38
2	Quick communication	11	22
3	Status symbol	0	0
4	Providing more service	7	14
5	Anytime contact	13	26
	Total	50	100

Source: Primary data

From the table no. 10.2, it could be inferred that most of the customers for some reasons or the other had started using the mobile phones instead of landlines phones. As many as 19 out of 50 respondents accounting for 38 per cent of the sample respondents had switched over to mobile phones for their mobility.

10.3 Number of mobile phones used at the households

A study was made with regard to the number of mobile phones handsets used by the family members in the sample respondents' households. The distribution of the sample respondents on the basis of the number of mobile phones used in their households had been given in table no. 10.3

Table 10.3
Number of mobile phones used in the households of the respondents

Sl.No	No. of mobile phones	No.of Respondents	Percentage to total
1	One	20	40
2	Two	25	50
3	Three	4	8
4	Four	1	2
5	Above four	0	0
	Total	50	100

Source: Primary data

The table no. 10.3 had shown that in total, a maximum of 50 percent of the customers' households (25 out of 50 respondents) had been using two mobile phones per household. It had been followed by 40 percent of the households (20 out of 50 respondents) had been using only one mobile phone per household.

10.4 Best aspects of cell phones

There were a number of reasons which had accounted for the inclination of the customers to select a particular handset. Aspects such as aesthetic look, brand image, sound, quality, price, video and special features influence the customers usually. These had been brought out in the table no. 10.4

Table 10.4
Best aspects in cell phones

Sl.No	Aspects	No.of Respondents	Percentage to total
1	Aesthetic look	5	10
2	Brand image	15	30
3	Sound	1	2
4	Quality	12	24
5	Price	7	14
6	Video	8	16
7	Special features	2	4
	Total	50	100

Source: Primary data

From the table no. 10.4, it would be known that 30 percent (15 out of 50 respondents) the brand image and only 2 percent or 1 out of the 50 respondents had a video and only 4 percent or 2 out of the 50 respondents had a special liking for the special features found in their mobile phones. Various aspects found in the recent mobile phones attract the customers to prefer a particular brand.

11. Findings of the study

*The study had revealed that 41 percent of the customers had been using their mobile phone for more than two years a very large proportion of the customers had preferred the mobile phones to establish their contacts with others while travelling from place to place

*Among the sample respondents 38 percent of the customers had switched over to mobile phones for their mobility

* A very high proportion of the respondents (50 percent) had been using two mobile phones in their households.

*It was found that 30 percent of the respondents had been using cell phones for various aspects found in the recent mobile phones attract the customers to prefer a particular brand.

12. Suggestions

The following suggestions might be made after a detailed and careful investigation of the research problem undertaken by study

*Prepaid cards were highly preferred by the customers. When the customers used the prepaid cards they would limit their talk time. When they were induced to use the post paid cards, the limitless talk time might become possible without any fear of the empty exhausted balance

*The call tariff was the most influencing factor which had induced the consumers to choose a particular mobile phone operator

*Customer care services play an important role in retaining the existing consumers

13. Conclusion

In the Indian mobile phone market, the competition among the various players had become at present more intense than ever, which was inevitable. They compete not only in providing best service and network quality by a huge amount of investment, and in network extension and upgrading, but also in customer satisfaction, customer retention and new acquisition of customers by direct and indirect price reduction. An aggressive strategy was needed to enhance the trustworthiness of the mobile phone operators by keeping the customers' best interest at heart and by providing customized services and by the exemplary behaviour of the contact personnel to make the interaction a memorable experience.

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